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ABSTRACT

When an interview is used as a research technique, the process of the dialogue between the experimenter and the subject is a part of the experimental conditions. The dialogue can be extensively structured, or it can be open-ended. Though the latter situation may provide more information about the subject's thought processes, there is a greater possibility of certain pitfalls, such as the experimenter missing the subject's thoughts by anticipating them and taking too strong a lead in the discussion. Another problem is introduced by the need to go beyond the point where the individual does not know any more. If a subject admits to not knowing any more, the experimenter must question further without insulting the subject. A third problem is created by the subject's dependency on the experimenter. The experimenter must balance a neutral questioning technique with interpretive judgments about the subject's responses. Finally, the data collection might most advantageously be separated into two activities: the interview and the analysis of the transcripts, including the analysis of the interviewer's own part in the dialogue. (BW)

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> "The external physical world is usually described in terms, say of atoms, forces that move them, and of the (linear) causal law ruling the movement. - The human social world is made up of people, not atoms; they respond to language, they react to meaning even though their bodies are also subject to external forces; they interact with one another. The principal mode of relationship between men, over and above physical causality, is communications. Indeed what a physical encounter means, decides human behaviour."
> (Hutton 1976, p 1)

This quotation from Hutton, a professor of theoretical physics, serves as a good example of the increasingly acknowledged distinction between descriptions of the world as such and descriptions of the world as perceived. Recently, Meehl (1978) in a review of the reasons behind the slow development of "soft psychology" (clinical, counselling, social, personal, community and school psychology) also pointed to the fact that the theories developed within this area, have been more orientented towards being directly empirically testable, rather than focusing on strong statements about conditions regulating reality. Meehl refers to the psychoanalytic theory as an example of the latter, and he states that in the present status of theoretical and clinical development, we just have to "bet on our favourite horse" in the choice between the falsity of the Freudian theory versus the claim that falsity of a theory does not matter, and that this choice leaves the way open to a new perspective on qualitative data. With some hesitation he concluded:

> "Once one sees that it is inappropriate to conflate the concepts rational and statistical then it is a fuzzy open question, in the present state of the metatheoretican's art, just when a mass of nonquantiative converging evidence can be said to have made a stronger case for a conjecture than the weak kinds of nonconverging quantitative evidence usually represented by the significance testing tradition. I say "when" rather than "whether" because it is blindingly obvious that sometimes qualitative evidence of certain sorts is superior in its empirical weight to what a typical social, personality, or clinical psychologist gets in support of a substantive theory by the mere refutation of the null hypothesis."
> (Meehl 1978, p 830)

Hence, Meehl (op cit) recognizes that, given certain theoretical conditions, qualitative empirical data, can have a substantial value, but he cannot fully describe those conditions.

An attempt to tackle this problem has been made by Marton (1978) in his partitioning of levels of descriptions.

> "A fundamental distinction is therefore made between two perspectives. In the first-order perspective, which is noumenal, or matter-or-fact, the intention is to describe the world as it is. The second-order perspective - is phenomenal, experiential, the world-as-perceived, the intention is to describe the world as people experience it. From the two different perspectives different aspects of reality are visible, and we arrive at different levels of description."
> (Marton 1979, p 1)

While we have developed a rich source for research techniques for studies within the first-order perspective and neglected technical developments within the second-order, this will lead, as Meehl (op cit) pointed out, to very slow development in those areas involving work with quantitatively formulated problems. Marton's work is a step within a lengthier tradition of work with qualitative data, the INOM-group at the Institute of Education, University of Göteborg, to which the present author also belongs.

There are two main reasons for bringing the practical aspects of this area of research to the fore. One is the growing criticism of the inadequacy of the traditional methods' ability to solve qualitative problems as expressed by Hutton (1976) and Meehl (1978) in the previous quotations. Another is the development which has taken place within the work of the INOM-group. Since the start with the first interviews, as reported by Dahlgren (1975), Säljö (1975) and Svensson (1976), and the recent work as reported by Svensson (1978) and Säljö (1979a, b) and Theman (1979a, b) the focus of interest, for the research on learning and cognition, has turned from the structure of the retention of a given text, towards the structuring of man's conceptions of all kinds of everyday problems.

This shift also implied a shift in research strategy and in the interview-technique, as being a part of the scientific instrumentation. In connection this shift of interest there also appeared new technical

problems, some of which we have had difficulties in overcoming. The aim of this paper will be to point to some of these new technical problems in the light of the theoretical and practical contexts where they have appeared.

In the above-mentioned development, it became more and more obvious, that the conceptions identified were heavily dependent on contextual factors and that the situation within which we had obtained our subjects' conceptions also formed a context to the answers given. This meant that we were forced to scrutinize our data-gathering situations to a much greater extent than had been intended in the earlier phase of the ongoing research program.

Säljö (1975) and Marton and Säljö (1976) have emphasized the importance of the finding that the question in an experimental setting does affect the retention of a previously read text. They even say:

> "The fundamental importance of recognizing the necessary link between the level of processing adopted by the student and the level of understanding reached cannot be overstated. Students adopt an approach determined by their expectations of what is required of them."
> (Marton and Säljö 1976, p 125. My underlining.)

Our recent reflections in connection with these findings are that even in the interview situation there exists factors which the respondent can recognize and adapt to and thus give a kind of report that would not have been given in a more realistic situation. This creates a threat to the validity of our results. The process of the dialogue that takes place between the experimenter and the subject is thus a part of the experimental conditions and we must concentrate our efforts on finding and overcoming the obstacles hampering this process.

Another factor of importance in the development of our research orientation, is the trend which goes from the study of retentional material to the identification of conceptions of phenomenon basic for the individual's ability to cope with reality (Marton 1976, 1978). In earlier studies by Dahlgren (1975), Säljö (1975) and Svensson (1976) the outcome-structures were obtained within a strict experimental design using an excerpt from a well-known text as the starting-point and with questions chosen and stated in advance. Though, fairly soon a more free-floating discussion became noticeable in the procedures; at first,

more in the form of supplementary advice to support a deeper understanding of the responses given by the subjects, but later taking a more fundamental place as the main source of the identification of the outcome obtained. In some experiments concerning effects on memory-structures, Wenestam (1978) made use of written answers, thereby heavily delineating the basis for later analysis. This very restricted form of the total material given, on the other hand, provided us with an opportunity to study the relationship between thought content and language use (Svensson 1978).

Two main restrictions are prevalent in the above mentioned studies. Firstly, our own knowledge of what reasonably could be said or remembered of the material given was absolute. In one sense one could say that we as experimenters always had "the right answer". Though our intention and the very basis for the studies being undertaken was just that there did not exist any such a thing as one and only one right answer. Though the main purpose was to find out what the subjects remembered and how this was expressed in terms of structures of the signified thought content, (Marton 1975) while accepting all kinds of expressions made, the experimental conditions were still strictly controlled.

In later experiments, Johansson and Lybeck (1978), Lybeck (1978a) and Lybeck (1978b) used a somewhat different method. Their studies concerned children's comprehension of various concepts in physics. Instead of a text to be read and reproduced, they had the children solve a certain problem demanding proportional reasoning. Then they had the children explain their results and how they had worked to arrive at the solution. This explanation took the form of a mutual talk and was often supported by drawings. The questioning was thus more or less totally free, but restricted to all kinds of possible conceptions of proportional relations. Thus, the experimental restrictions were placed to a greater degree within the authors previous knowledge of theory of physics; the theory in turn stated the laws governing the treated phenomenon, while the experimental setting was able to take a much freer form. In this situation it was obvious that the experimenter himself became a part of his own instrumentalization. Both in the direct interview and in the later part of the analysis. Lybeck says:

> "There is no algoritmic procedure for finding the distinct ways in which the students comprehend the task. The students response categories can not be produced, they have to be found

> in the very analysis of the data of the students' thought content related to the content of the subject matter in the tasks."
> (Lybeck 1978b, p8)

Thus, Lybeck stresses the importance of the experimenter's thorough understanding of what the subjects thoughts are about but still with the restrictions that Lybeck himself had a substantial knowledge of the theory on the topic studied.

The second important restriction concerns the extent to which we know or can check, the original information in the experimental setting. When we turned our attention to the learning and acquisition of everyday phenomenon, it was not necessary, perhaps not even desirable, to "give" the subject something like a starting point. Rather, it turned out to be of importance to have them make a free choice of their own. In this situation it turned out that making a too narrow definition of the task, which was a necessary prerequisite in the earlier studies, was now obviously a hampering factor. It meant that we unintentionally impinged on a structure in the subject's own conception. We can never take for granted that we know what our subjects know about a certain phenomenon, even though we are able to talk around it in very similar general terms. There exists a large variation in the meaning behind conceptions of everyday phenomena (Theman 1978a, b). As Marton (Marton and Svensson 1978) has pointed out, these different perspectives about one and the same phenomenon can be so entirely different that one conception may be invisible, and hence unacceptable from the perspective which generates another conception. In a more practical sense, this leaves us with the difficulty of trying to look for something which we cannot see before we have encountered the signs of its existence, i.e. before we have had a subject demonstrate his/her conceptual build-up in the experimental situation. We could not take for granted that we knew the context of the subject's conception, nor that we were naturally able to understand and grasp the conception being expressed.

In this situation where nothing could be taken for granted, and everything could be accepted as valid, we reached an experimental situation where the outcome to a large extent became dependent on the atmosphere in the talks, the data gathering situation. This very open-ended strategy led directly to a number of new, strict demands: both as being one

of two adults in an interaction and as researcher in contact with a voluntary subject. It showed that there existed some very special threats which could, if disregarded, severely impair the opportunity of obtaining the full and rich information that we were looking for. In the following I shall try to exemplify some of these events and our present strategy to overcome this.

We have realized that we must be more cautious and aware in the interview situation. We are a part of the instrumentation in our own search for knowledge and must take full responsibility for this. We must make use of our capability as human beings to respond to and understand other human beings i.e. the respondent in our interviews. Merely to do what already Lewin (1935) pointed at in his criticism of the Aristotelian way of reasoning, that the whole situation is constantly changing with the process. In our talks, the situation, with its expectations and fulfilments, constantly alters and this must be taken into consideration during the dialogue. This is a complicated process with many pit-falls. Some of them will be demonstrated below.

1. Missing utterences through anticipation

We have to our astonishment found that we "knew" after, or during the talk, that we had covered a certain area, but when we read the transcription afterwards, the description was not there.

Quotation 1.
The talk is about power where the sujbect has just mentioned that "power" in some sense could be taken away from the politicans as a result of the enlarged fuss that would arise from an open demonstration in the streets.

$E_{(1)}$ Is that also power?

$S_{(1)}$ Yes, in its own way, yes.

$E_{(2)}$ How do you mean?

$S_{(2)}$ Well, you have made the politicans aware that this is wrong. Almost like I thought. In someway.

$E_{(3)}$ Power is the same as getting someone to think the same as I do. Or at least to make them act as if they thought the way I do?

$S_{(3)}$ Yes, even if they don't think so, maybe.

$E_{(4)}$ Exactly. Especially if it then were such a democratic process, where a majority has to decide over ... (noisy disturbancies)

$S_{(4)}$ Yes, precisely.

$E_{(5)}$ ... over the minority. Then it is power to be able to shape this.

$S_{(5)}$ Yes.

$E_{(5)}$ In a special setting. You also mentioned a term, which I found interesting. You said 'one should take care of certain things'. It was somehow powerful to take care of things in such a way that it turned my way.

$S_{(6)}$ Yes, that's a certain type of power.

$E_{(6)}$ Who, then, took care of the decision-making in such a way, that there wasn't a garage built?

In this excerpt, two things can be clearly observed. The answer waited for, that you can build your own power by making people believe that they think the way you do, thereby turning your own originally minority opinion into a majority position, is only revealed through the E-passages. Namely E_3 - E_5. But was clearly hinted at in S_2.

My own memory was that S had uttered this passage. To my surprise, I found S only said "yes", "precisely" and the like. In E_6 - E_7 I reversed the situation again. Looking for reference to the actual situation which served as an example for our talk about power. My own reaction today to this "turn-over" situation is that I obviously longed too much for that kind of answer. When the subject in S_2 almost says the "thing" I want to hear, it works like a trigger, it makes me immediately take the lead. I am surely on the right track, but if the object of the excercise is to find out about how another person expresses his thinking, and the proof is to consist of verbal excerpts, then this way of leading the discussion would be catastrophic. I had made an effort myself for nothing. I shall never be able to use this conception because I cannot differentiate it from my own.

2. Dependency

Another example of a take-over function during the interview is the dependency of the unsecure part in the talks. As one of our aims in the dialogue is to bring our partner into a partly unreflected arc of his/her body of knowledge, there will necessarily be a situation in

which he/she will be rather uncertain and insecure. Our hope is that this state of insecurity will be temporary and vanish once it has been recognized as such and thereby can be carefully explained and accepted. But there still remains the possibility that this dependency will not be overcome, resulting in the same technical difficulty as the foregoing exchange of utterances. In the transcripts, we are unable to recognize the limits of the partner's responsibility and our influence. I will give an example to show what I mean. The first excerpt follows directly after E having made an exchange of words in the previously mentioned sense that made E to take over an explanatory function.

Quotation 2.

S Well, yes you can say so. That was a good suggestion (laughing) ... well you'll have to give me a hand now and then, course, I can't find the right words, you know.

E Well, yes, maybe, but I suppose that you also want to find them for yourself. So you will be able to make a point out of what I just said. That you really feel that what you say isn't something I just told you to say.

S No. That's right. But it was a very suitable word, this "opinion" I found it very good.

In this case, the experimenter solves a kind of hesitation by giving the exactly right (perfect) interpretation of the thought not yet expressed. If the interpretation is correct, there is no room for a denial or an exchange. The only thing left for the subject is to repeat the same word or to agree. A repetition sounds awkward, hence there will be some kind of admission, which will not make the thought being expressed, appear as an utterance by the subject in the resulting transcripts.

In this exchange, it also is evident how dependency is established as a result of greatefulness. The subject was happy to have received help in a somewhat troublesome situation.

Another example of this could be the following, where the subject just has explained that the effect of a demonstration was, that there was no further preparatory construction activity and hence no more expenses. This explanation emerged after many difficulties and a lot

of interruptions so E made a summary in his own terms trying to express the conception in a more economical way (E_1).

Quotation 3.

$E_{(1)}$ So, the role of the demonstration was that it brought about a delay in the constructional work, thereby hindering further destruction of the ground. And then it won't be so expensive to rep....

$S_{(1)}$ No. Exactly.

$E_{(2)}$ And then, you don't have to bring up this special aspect of costs.

$S_{(2)}$ How well. You expressed this briefly and well. You expressed my thoughts exactly.

$E_{(3)}$ Well, yes, well. Let me than try to make it a bit more complicated again.

$S_{(3)}$ Oh no! .. Well, all right.

The praise expressed in S_2 was turned down almost immediately and in a somewhat harsh way. Still, the basic trust survives, and after the initital resignation S accepts the conditions of the talk, making it obvious that the situation still is an explorative study of conceptions.

The dependency developed in this way can be used in the forthcoming dialogue to overcome disturbances caused by misunderstandings, the use of too advanced language, the insistence on giving a more articulated answer to the complicated questions.

Quotation 4.

$E_{(1)}$ Can you explain this further. About how you can support the already existing majority. How can you do that?

$S_{(1)}$ You mean without being active or .... well you can join their ...

$E_{(2)}$ No. I meant this action taking place in the market-place. The action had, as you recently expressed it, the purpose supporting the existing majority. In the market-place. Just at the same moment when the political majority declares 'We will start the building activities at the market'.

$S_{(2)}$ You'll have to give me some help here. I don't know what to say now. The sentences are too long. I get caught up in this. I can't remember what you said as soon as I started to reflect upon 'What do you mean?'.

$E_{(3)}$ Well, I think we are approaching the point where things turn really difficult. It's time to combine the different

parts we have discussed so far. As I mentioned in the beginning of our talk, we must start bringing the facts together and reaching some conclusions.

$S_{(3)}$ You just twist things here and there in such a terrible way that I can't .... I can't grasp this (laughing). Can't you take it in smaller parts? Than I'll see if it's not like that, that I can make things more clear for myself.

$E_{(4)}$ All right. Let's go back then, to the question about those groups. Do they have any chance of influencing the people standing in the market-place?

$S_{(4)}$ Yes they have.

In quotation 4, three technical obstacles are represented. E_1 is too complex a question. In S_1 there is obvious confusion. Then E regrets the formulation and in order to get a quick correction, interrupts S. Realizing this as also being erroneous E loses himself in a too complex explanation. S is totally lost. Normally this would have led to a severe breakdown in the contact between E and S. But in this case S falls back on the established dependency and asks for help. A request that liberates E from the previous demanding position and thus the situation is restructured. E can give the support asked for, thereby simultaneously saving S from the bad position of having been forced into the inferior position and at the same time giving S the ability to handle with the impropoperly formulated question. The time mentioned as important but S had difficulties in expressing the conception and E had difficulties in understanding what it was all about. In such a situation it is very easy to drop the topic. Either in order to repair the break in the relationship or to make the exchange as such, a concession to compensate the loss of faith.

3. The problem of ignorance

A special problem is introduced by our need to go beyond the point where the individual does not know any more. We want the person to express as much as possible, then to try to add some new facts to the body of knowledge already presented, then to reflect on the total description, and finally to comment on the whole process.

We realized that on many occasions we were not able to follow the strategy outlined above. There are many possible pit-falls connected with such an open dialogue and, if not avoided, they will lead

to a breakdown of the strategy resulting in denials and a refusal to penetrate the topic further.

One of these points of potential departure from the interview strategy is when the subject says that he/she does not know anything more. The statement cannot be accepted without a check-up on what it is that the person does not know. It can be the meaning of the last question, it can be a sign that the person is getting tired and wants to stop and it can of course be a completely true statement. Whatever the background placing the utterance "I don't know any more" as the answer to a question could be perceived as a lack of respect for the subject's ability to judge for himself.

What we mean is that we cannot pass this point without having made very clear that further questioning is part of our research method and not an insult. In many instances it does not suffice to say or declare our intentions. We have to demonstrate this directly in the relationship with the subject. This is not easy to make clear through quotations due to the fact that it is a prolonged, ongoing process throughout the talk. One way to demonstrate this is to describe and make use of our own area of unknown knowledge. We must ask questions to which we previously wanted to elicit answer, and which we honestly do not know. We must show how our questioning helps us in our own knowledge-building activity. Expressed differently, one could say that we must obtain genuine legitimacy for the way we work in the situation and from our subject. If given this legitimation we can also afford and enduse strong conflicts during the talk. Both conflicts arise from the subject area, e.g. our proposals that the subjects, as a matter of fact, know more in spite of his/her own statement that he/she does not; and conflicts on a direct personal level like frequent interruptions, nagging, insisting, or being fed up with the situation in general.

Establishing a social contract

No two interview situations are alike. However, we have found some general tips on how to conduct a dialogue in order to minimize the risk of too large misunderstandings. It is of outmost importance that we show and demonstrate our own sincerity in our whish to know the subject's conception of the phenomenon in question. This means that we

must tell them this at the start of the interview as well as demonstrating our sincerity as soon as the situation requirers it. This can be described as an ongoing defence against the tacit accusation that we still ask our questions in a manipulative way, purely for the sake of testing the subject's knowledge. An example where this can occur, is when people missconceive what we mean by the word "conception". We stress the descriptive aspect, while most people base their way of thinking on an explanatory aspect of the word. The clarification of this difference can often be as complicated as it is important. Expressed differently, one could say that in the first place we must express our intentions and the technique we intend to use. Then, secondly, we must demonstrate our significance of these earlier statements by practical examples, thereby using those instances which appear during the talk. This necessarily means that we will have to make a break, saying: "This was exactly the type of situation I mentioned earlier as being troublesome. Do you see what I mean?". One can say that we have to act the way we teach. We must feel that the subject honestly makes use of us as a resource in his/her own search for further understanding. This means, that we are allowed to suggest forms of expression without intending to convince the subjects. They are free to reject our statements and to use them to further development of their own. They also accept the fact that we must ask them to rephrase it in their own words, to avoid the problem of "exchange of utterances" mentioned earlier. They also often reflect spontaneously that the talk if it has been conducted in this way, has given them a rich and interesting opportunity to reflect about their own way of reflecting. They say "I did not know, I know so much (or little) about this topic or I have never thought about this way I have of thinking".

Another distinct quality of our way of securing an open and permissive atmosphere is to allow for irrelevant feelings. To interrupt just to mention that we recognized that the subject suddenly was embarrased at having revealed a conception which in a normal social context could easily be called faulty or unacceptable. Such as being antidemocratic, believing in the power of police-violence etc.

Handling the interview in such a way leaves us with additional problems. They often turn out to be rather time-consuming and we find ourselves in the position during the analysis of having to read long

transcriptions over and over again. But on the other hand we get a uniquely detailed and reliable body of material, to a great extent made independent of the experimental situation.

Discussion

One of the main features of this new approach lies in the different demands being made on experimental control. Within earlier experimental tradition, there were strict demands on keeping the independent and dependent variables under control, by minimizing and excluding all external factors that might be able to disturb the experimental set-up. In doing so, a large number of artificial restrictions were made on the number of ways in which phenomena could be studied. With reference to the criticism expressed by Meehl (1978), one could even say that such paradigmatic restrictions have merely hampered the range of the art of phenomenon, that could possibly be studied. The research area concerning student learning has made no exception in this respect. The shift in approach as suggested by Marton and Säljö (1976) and Marton (1978) points at both a possibility to study the earlier unreachable phenomena and a way of retaining a high standard of scientific control. However, the controls then shift from being external, placed between the subject/experimenter and the situation, towards being internal, placed in the relationship between the subject and the experimenter with reference to the actual context. It is in this situation that we have seen the dependency between subject and experimenter as a technical problem.

Some technical problems

The problem of dependence between the researchleader and the subject highlights three secundary problems which I will discuss in brief.

1. In the traditional type of interview technique (see e.g. Kahn and Cannell, 1957) there is strong emphasis on the experimenter being as neutral, objective and firm as possible. It is also emphasized that the social background of the interviewer constitues a major drawback if the discrepancy between it and that of the subject tends to be too large. In short, a very mechanistic attitude to the relation between interviewer and respondent. This art of the technique still remains of the predominant one in modern science. Laurillard (1979) stated that

> "The purpose of the interviews with students is to help them to give as full and accurate an account as possible of the way they worked on particular learning task. Given this aim, a number of constraints are imposed in the form of the questions."
> (Laurillard 1979, p 3)

Laurillard then lists some of those constraints, e.g. that questions "should not impose an unnecessary load of interpretative or introspective effort on the student", and emphasizing "clarification questions, follow-up questions and validating questions". The last form, validating questions was described by the author as

> "... if the student says he found the whole task difficult, it is worth asking nonetheless if there was any part he found straight forward as it is probable that this is a statement of a general feeling about the task rather than an accurate description of all his work on it."

Thus, though one should not "put an unnecessary load of interpretation press" on the subject, the interviewer himself may make use of hints and interpretations in his work. Even to the extent of clearly marking that the subject is not at all giving a correct or even good answer to the question. In a sense, this highlights the difficulties inherent in an "objective" and mechanistic approach. If the researcher wants to get somewhere in the accomplishment of the task of having an as good as possible account of the students' understanding, he has to make use of his own understanding and interpretation of the situation and the answers given within this, in spite of the obligation to keep to a neutral and probing approach.

To keep to only neutral and objective types of questioning leaves the interview open to the danger of getting a "pleasing of the teacher"-structure or other types of false answers. Piaget (1929) pointed at, with respect to interviews with children, the necessity of always trying to understand the answers in relation to the situation of the child istself, by testing, interpreting, requestioning and other kinds of introspective-provoking means. Another aspect of this problem is the situation. In student learning it has mostly been taken for granted, that there was some kind of substantial body of knowledge to which

one could refer. Objectively, there was a possibility of having a correct and accurate description of the phenomenon asked for. To use the extreme variant; the absolute accurate answer to what a chapter in a book is about, is of course a complete reproduction of the book as it was written. But that restricts the possible outcome to a very superficial kind of knowledge as well as leaving out the author's intention and meaning behind the text. In the case of our interviews, as they have been quoted in this paper, there existed no such prior fund of knowledge. The talks were based on the assumption, that the subject had some kind of awareness of the actual phenomenon, and the aim of the talks was to make the person articulate this awareness as far as possible. The earlier work of the INOM-group and the present trend has shown that the kind of constraints put on the situation to some extent emerge from the kind of starting-point we have chosen, and that the interviewing technique being used must reflect this fact. And that if we want to get an insight into how people think about their own thinking and learning we must relate to them in such a way that we can demonstrate our own way of functioning. We must, as researchers, learn to take the risk of being dependent on our subjects, and vice versa, and to learn how to solve this.

2. There is a dominance-factor involved in the dependency issue. There is a widely held view that if you want to elicit an answer from a subject, you should be, or pretend to be, no better than him. All in order to create a friendly permissive, non-threatening atmosphere.

This subterfuge is the very weak point. In a dialective relationship where the initiative and the superior knowledge of the issue and the control of time limits and economical benefits all end up in the hands of one person there exists no equality. And the same applies to our own experimental situations, in spite of all subterfuges (see e.g. Rogers 1961 for an elaboration of this theme). As a matter of fact, not being a genuine person, in a sitaution where this is demanded, means missing the point, i.e. the level of reality claimed for.

We cannot say that we in any, and least of all, in Roger' sense, have established a genuine relationship in our interviews, but

we have realized that there is a demand for this, and we have accepted that equality does not result from subterfuges and statements, but rather on making it come true in the interview situation. And that means that we have to take a risk. The risk is to accept our subjects exactly as they are, and that we are in charge of the situation.

3. The relationship between the interviewer and the subject is at times very intensive. During these moments the interviewer has to face the difficult demands of being able to concentrating simultaneously on having an accurate overlapping control of the situation and retaining a deep involvement in the ongoing process of mutual understanding. Putting most emphasis on control means losses in the closeness of the dialogue and emphasis in the opposite direction means losing the ability to guide the talk in accordance with the structure decided on by the experimenter.

Carrying out one or the other of these alternatives leads to consequencis for the outcome of the data-gathering process. While the former alternative, retaining the structure, has nearly always been the standard leading to well known shortcomings in the interview method, the latter risk could be partly cancelled by making a formal division of the collecting process into two parts. In the first part then (the interview situation) full concentration could be given to the ongoing dialectical process. The demand on the researcher engaged in this, would be to implement a dialectical relationship within the framework provided by the topic. In the second part, which is the analysis of the transcripts from the interview, the demand on the researcher would be to make a proper analysis of the text given. This analysis being governed by hermeneutical principles. An outstanding feature of this analysis would be, however, that the researcher would have to analyse himself as one of the parts in the written dialogue. This procedure could be experienced as somewhat strange but our work has convinced us that this difficulty could be mastered with some practize.

The division of the data-collecting process into interview and analyses, thus provides a possibility of keeping a high level of control of what is being said without losing the deepness

and sincerity in the contact between experimenter and subject which is of outmost importance for creating a mutual respect and understanding in the situation.

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